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SUBJECT: SAHRAWI ACTIVIST HAIDAR'S SAFE RETURN TO LAYOUNE

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¶1. (SBU) Aminetou Haidar, the prominent Sahrawi human rights activist, returned to her home in Layoune on November 15, following an extended trip abroad. According to an account posted on the website of the Polisario Front, confirmed by Embassy contacts in Western Sahara, Haidar arrived at Layoune airport on a flight from the Canary Islands accompanied by two representatives of Spanish human rights NGOs as well as an activist Italian judge.

¶2. (SBU) The flight was met by Moroccan police, who insisted that only Moroccan citizens could disembark. Haidar initially balked, maintaining that she is a Sahrawi rather than Moroccan citizen (although she travels on a Moroccan passport) but she eventually disembarked and was admitted without incident. The European NGO representatives did not deplane at Layoune.

¶3. (SBU) A large group of Sahrawi activists gathered at Haidar's Layoune home to welcome her back. There was a conspicuous security force presence outside Haidar's home, but no reported interference in her "welcome back" party.

¶4. (SBU) The Embassy will continue to monitor closely Haidar's status and the overall human rights situation in Western Sahara.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/rabat>

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